

## Celebrating Bandi Shoor Divas

### Why do Sikhs Celebrate Diwali Today?

We pray to Guru, to give us freedom. But why do we need freedom? Freedom from what? Are we not free?

The answer is no! We are enslaved by lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. We have an obsession with our bodies, a craving for wealth, jealousy, short tempers, an obsession with the opposite sex etc. These are all manifestations of enslavement. We therefore pray to the Liberator, for our liberation from these worldly bonds.

### Lets Light a Diva

If you go to a Gurdwara on this day, it is usual to see many Divas. A Diva is a clay pot, containing oil and a wick. It is always nice to light a Diva. But what does the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji say about lighting Divas?

*"The name of God is the Diva and into this Diva we put the oil of suffering. The flame dries the oil of suffering and I become one with the Lord."* (SGGSJ, p.295)

The Guru is saying that we should remember God and that this remembrance will help us to illuminate our mind. Now coming back to the question of lighting Divas. There is nothing wrong with lighting a Diva in your home or in the Gurdwara. But don't forget to light your mind!

## Summary

- Act selflessly by serving others before yourself.
- Remember to light your mind by remembering God.

## Remembering God

Try to remember God throughout your day, but also take a few minutes to just recite the Mool Mantra (root chant), a few times in the morning in Punjabi or English. It is important to have love for God in your mind whenever you meditate. The Mool Mantra connects you to the primal source of the universe, which is God. You have nothing to lose so give it a shot!

## Mool Mantra

- **Ik Oūnkār** - There is only One God, who creates, sustains and destroys, and exists without change
- **Sat Nām** - God's name is Truth
- **Kartā Purakh** - God is the Creator, and resides within the Creation
- **Nirbhau** - God is Fearless
- **Nirvair** - God is without Enmity
- **Akāl Mūrat** - God is beyond time
- **Ajūnī** - God is unborn
- **Saibhañ** - God is self-existent
- **Gur Prasād** - God is realised by the Grace of the Guru



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# Bandi Shoor Divas

Sikh Dharma

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## What is Bandi Shoor Divas?

### What does it Mean?

'Bandi Shorr Divas' means 'Day of Freedom'. It is also known as 'Diwali' or 'Deepawali' which means 'row of lights'. It is celebrated in October-November by both Sikhs and Hindus.

### Why do Sikhs celebrate Diwali?

This is the day when Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji was released from Gwalior fort along with 52 other prisoners.

## The History

### Why was the Guru put in a fort?

During the time of the 6th Guru, Sikh dharma had become the fastest growing religion in India. Unfortunately religious leaders and the Mogul Emperor became jealous, so they ordered Guru Ji to be detained in Gwalior fort.

### So what did the Guru do?

Guru Ji accepted the decision without hesitation and the next morning he set out for Gwalior fort, accompanied only by a few Sikhs.

### Was there anyone else in the fort?

Yes. On entering the fort, the Guru was greeted by 52 Hindu kings. They had been stripped off their kingdoms by the Mogul Emperor, Jahangir and were being ill-treated. They were not provided with sufficient food and nor with clean clothes to wear.

### What did the Guru do inside the fort?

The Guru gave everyone hope, by telling them about the reality of life and by en-

gaging them in Naam Simran (meditation). Most of them became the Guru's Sikhs.

### What was the reaction of the Emperor?

Jahangir was surprised by Guru Ji's popularity in the fort. In addition to this a group of Sikhs also campaigned in Delhi to secure Guru Ji's release. Troubled with fearful visions, the Emperor gave orders for Guru Ji's release.

### Why did the Guru refuse freedom?

The Guru refused to come out of the fort, until all the other 52 innocent prisoners were set free. The Mogul Emperor, thinking himself to be clever proposed to release any and every prisoner that could hold on to the Guru's clothing.

### Did the Guru accept this proposition?

Yes! Guru Hargobind ordered a special cloak to be made with 52 tassels. 52 pieces of cloth of different lengths were then tied to each tassel and each prisoner held one of these. It followed that on the day of Diwali in 1619 AD, the 6th Guru was released from Gwalior fort along with all 52 Hindu kings. Henceforth the Guru was called the 'Freedom Provider' or 'Liberator'.

### What happened then?

The Guru returned to Amritsar, where a magnificent celebration was held. The Har-

mandir Sahib was beautifully decorated and fireworks illuminated the sky. People were elated and they sang Religious hymns.

## What Do We Learn?

### Practical Teachings

It is a rare occasion when we human beings perform actions, which are solely for the benefit of other people. It is human nature to be selfish. However on this day the Guru taught us the concept of selfless service. The Guru could easily have left the fort and gone back to Amritsar. However he chose to stay in Gwalior fort so as to deliver freedom for everyone. We should all try to practice this teaching in our own lives.

### What Can I do?

Perform selfless tasks like:

- Community Work - e.g. Help out at the local Gurdwara
- Voluntary Work - e.g. Help at homeless shelters
- Take on some of the projects with the ProjectNaad group
- Simple things like when someone asks for your help then take some time out and do so.
- Share your time and wealth - e.g. Provide support to charities. Get involved if you can.

